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MARRO, THE HINDOO GROOM.

It has been justly observed, by more than one recent writer on India, that the Europeans do not treat the natives of that country with anything like the kindness and benevolence which should characterise the conduct of men leaving a highly civilised community to live amongst a semi-refined, but extremely observant and imitative people. Much as the religion of the Hindoos leads them to put their faith in caste, and to neglect or ignore all higher feelings and aspirations than those presented to them or exhibited in the lives of the "sacred" Brahmins, yet they keenly mark the actions, and listen to the words, of the *Sahelbhoke*, as they call the Europeans, and this with a view to imitate the one and reproduce the other as soon as possible.

Lieutenant Crawley had left England at an early age to enter the military service of the Hon. East India Company, and, as good fate would have it, he was posted to the Bengal presidency. Calcutta being the head-quarters of government and of Indian fashionable existence, is naturally regarded with more favour by the incipient soldier than Madras and Bombay. Arrived at Calcutta, Ensign Crawley, with a company of other youths of the same rank, was handed over to the tender mercies of an aged major, who took care of the boys on landing, prevented them, when he could, from falling into the hands of sharpers, and in due time posted them, like letters, for the particular station in the Upper Provinces to which they might be ordered.

Crawley soon obtained a second lieutenancy in the 123rd regiment of Bengal Native Infantry, then stationed at Dinapore, a considerable distance from Calcutta up the Ganges, and in due time was delivered there by the steamer—the cranky old major having himself seen him off. The young officer had escaped from Calcutta with as little loss of reputation and money as could have been expected. It was discovered, indeed, that he knew nothing of riding, and this reputation of his preceded him of course to his regiment; and, secondly, he had only become indebted to an old Hindoo merchant for about twelve thousand rupees (£1,200). As to his unsavoury reputation, he hoped soon to remove it by zealous devotion to horse exercise, until he thoroughly mastered its difficulties and dangers; and as to the second, he knew that many other young men were far worse off than he, and that, by paying forty rupees a month, he would be able to keep down the interest, whilst he hoped soon to be able to pay off the principal by the remittances from the "governor," for which he had earnestly written, strongly urging upon his venerable parent that the cost of his uniform was far greater than either of them had anticipated, and that travelling expenses in India were unconscionable.

Arrived in Dinapore, Crawley began, of course, like all second lieutenants, by purchasing a horse—all the officers rode, and he must ride too. A horse necessitated a groom, and for a groom Crawley hired a big mountaineer, who happened then to be in Dinapore in want of service, and who had previously served the deputy-governor of Bengal.

One day he had been out at dinner, and returned somewhat earlier than usual, vexed and annoyed at the jokes which had been passed upon him. When he arrived, therefore, at the stables, it was in no pleasant mood, and, as Marro did not happen to be there at the exact moment when he was wanted, the young officer was still more vexed at having to call for him two or three times. At length Marro came running to the spot; he had not expected his master home so soon, and was standing in the immediate neighbourhood chatting with a friend or two who had come into the cantonments to see him, when Crawley rode up. A few trees had prevented the swarthy groom from seeing his master, but he recognised the well-known voice at once, and sprang forwards to seize the bridle.

"Why weren't you here, sir," asked Crawley sternly, "when I rode up?"

"Master come home plenty soon to-day," urged Marro meekly. "I not see master come in."

"Well, sir, another time look sharper," said Crawley, who now stood on the ground, having dismounted, "and this, perhaps, will make you remember to do so." So saying, he brought his riding-whip down upon the bare shoulders of the groom three or four times with all his might.

"Master not hit me," said Marro, standing erect, his fine form swelling with indignation, whilst the blood mantled deeply in his cheeks.

"What, sir, are you going to be insolent?" asked Crawley, coming up again. "Take that, and that, and that." And so saying, he brought his whip again and again into contact with the quivering flesh of the tall Hindoo.

Marro, however, offered no opposition; the first flush of resistance and opposition over, he stood motionless and silent, not the less determined, however, to be revenged. His friends witnessed the assault from the parade-ground, and the colonel of Crawley's regiment—a humane man, bent on putting an end to such scenes—saw the whole transaction from his window above.

The colonel sent for Marro next morning. "Go before the magistrate, my man," said he to the groom, "and state your case. Don't be afraid. I'll get you another place, and I'll be a witness."

This was precisely what Marro had intended to do. He went to the magistrates; Crawley was duly summoned, the witnesses attended, and the young officer was fined fifty rupees (£5) for the assault. He returned to his quarters vowing vengeance against all Hindoos in general, and against Marro in particular. He determined that a notable example should be made of the doomed Marro—an example all the more striking and impressive from his size and strength.

The opportunity for this notable example was at length found. Marro was working in the stable; the other servants were out of the way. Crawley resolved forthwith to have his revenge, whilst two of his comrades were to assist by keeping everybody out of the way, and leaving the coast clear for their friend. Whip in hand, Crawley advanced into the stable, and shut the door behind him.

"Now," said he, advancing in a threatening attitude to Marro, "now you scoundrel, there are no witnesses, and I'll take the worth of my fifty rupees." He shook the riding-whip ominously as he spoke, bringing it now and then into contact with his boot.

Marro joined his hands before him, after the manner of his class, and bent his body in a deprecating way to the wrathful Crawley. "Master, forgive all," urged Marro. "Master not hit his slave now?"

"Yes, I forgave all till I had an opportunity to revenge—no longer," said Crawley, bringing his horsewhip down upon the bare shoulders of the big groom. "But now," he continued, "I have taken care you shall have no witnesses; and I'll pay you off, thoroughly."

Blow after blow descended upon the naked shoulders of the muscular Hindoo; but there is a limit to human endurance, and even a Hindoo will sometimes rebel. Without saying a word more, Marro sprang upon his assailant suddenly, and, seizing the horsewhip, speedily disarmed his master; for there was no comparison between the physical force of the two combatants.

It was now Marro's turn. Holding Crawley with one hand, he brought down the other, with the horsewhip in it, vigorously upon the shoulders and legs of the tyrant-master. An Englishman, however, even of Crawley's stamp, will not quietly suffer himself to be flogged by any Hindoo, big or little. There was a struggle, and Crawley fell beneath Marro, who, holding his master down, plied the whip more vigorously than ever, making it resound as he brought it rapidly and repeatedly into contact with the body of his prostrate foe.

Crawley had learnt a lesson that he did not soon forget, and, for a long time, he took heed not to use his horsewhip for any other than its legitimate purpose. As for Marro, he was never heard of again at Dinapore. Thinking he had committed a grievous crime, he fled to Benares, and there, under an assumed name, lived happily and prosperously.